

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 SAB-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 NIC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 ACDA-19

DRC-01 SSO-00 /155 W

----- 125316

P 121050Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8350

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6623

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, UR, XF

SUBJECT: CALL ON SOVIET AMBASSADOR AZIMOV

1. SUMMARY: SOV. AMBASSADOR BEIRUT AZIMOV CRITICIZES WALDHEIM FOR LETHARGY RE GENEVA BUT ADMITS THERE IS MUCH PREPARATION TO BE DONE. HE INQUIRES RE PRESENT SITUATION IN ISRAEL AND OBJECTIVES OF PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EASTERN TRIP. END SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET AMBASSADOR AZIMOV RETURNED BEIRUT APPROXIMATELY JUNE 1 FROM TWO MONTHS LEAVE IN THE SOVIET UNION. IT WAS THEREFORE NOT UNTIL YESTERDAY, JUNE 11, THAT I WAS ABLE TO CALL ON HIM. AFTER FRIENDLY AMENITIES AZIMOV CRITICIZED UN SEC GEN WALDHEIM RE "LETHARGY" HE EXPRESSED RE CONVENING GENEVA CONFERENCE. AZIMOV SAID SOVIETS BELIEVED A MEETING SHOULD BE HELD FORTHWITH IN GENEVA TO SETTLE MID-EASTERN PROBLEMS. IT WAS HIGH TIME THE "AGGRESSORS" CONFIDENTIAL

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WITHDREW FROM THE LANDS THEY OCCUPIED BY FORCE AND

THAT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLES BE ACCORDED THEIR JUST RIGHTS. I ASKED AZIMOV WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE CAIRO MEETING OF PALESTINIAN LEADERS. HE SAID IT HAD NOT LED TO ALL THE CONCLUSIONS HE HAD HOPED FOR, BUT HE THOUGHT IT WAS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I THEN ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS MUCH MORE WORK THAT HAD TO BE DONE BY THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES AND IN COORDINATION WITH, AND AMONG, OTHER ARAB LEADERS. I POINTED OUT THAT I BELIEVED PERSONALLY THAT ISRAEL, WITH ITS NEW GOVERNMENT THAT WAS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM ITS PREDECESSOR NEEDED TIME TO SORT OUT ITS OWN THINKING. I ASKED HIM IF IT WAS NOT SOVIET POLICY TO ASSURE SUCCESS OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. HE WAS MOST AFFIRMATIVE ON THIS POINT AND APPEARED RELUCTANTLY TO AGREE THAT IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE FOR A CONFERENCE TO BE CONVENED IF ALL SIDES HAD NOT COME TO PRETTY CLEAR CONCLUSIONS AND EVEN AGREEMENTS ON WHAT HAD TO BE SETTLED AT GENEVA.

3. DURING EXCHANGE AMENITIES AZIMOV HAD SPOKEN WARMLY OF US-USSR DETENTE AND AGREEMENTS REACHED BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. I CONCURRED WITH THESE VIEWS, CITING IMMENSE AMOUNT OF PRELIMINARY WORK THAT HAD BEEN DONE PRIOR TO SIGNATURE OF AGREEMENTS. HERE AGAIN I REFERRED TO GENEVA, SAYING THAT IT WAS MY PERSONAL VIEW THAT EVEN MORE EXTENSIVE PREPARATORY WORK HAD TO BE DONE TO ASSURE THE SUCCESS OF A LARGE CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST.

4. AZIMOV THEN INQUIRED AS TO MY VIEW ON WHETHER ISRAEL WAS PREPARED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE TERRITORIES IT HAD "TAKEN BY FORCE" SINCE OR EVEN BEFORE 1967. I TOLD HIM I WAS NO EXPERT ON THESE MATTERS BUT THAT I PERSONALLY HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH WHAT I HAD READ ABOUT THE COMPLEXION OF THE CURRENT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AND THE CHANGES IN ISRAEL FOLLOWING THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE OF THE OCTOBER WAR, THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS, AND THE DEMISE OF THE MEIR GOVERNMENT. IT WAS MY PERSONAL VIEW THAT A BASIC CHANGE HAD OCCURRED IN THE ISRAELI OUTLOOK AND THAT ISRAEL NOW REALIZED IT HAD TO ADOPT

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A POLICY CONDUCIVE TO LIVING PEACEFULLY WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. THE SOVIET ASKED IF ISRAEL COULD BE "FORCED" TO ADOPT SUCH A NEW POSITION, WHICH I COUNTERED BY POINTING OUT THAT I THOUGHT WE WERE NOW TALKING OF NEGOTIATIONS AND WERE NO LONGER REFERRING TO FORCE. AZIMOV REFERRED TO HIS OWN PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF RABIN WHOM HE APPARENTLY HAD MET IN NEW YORK AND OPINED THAT RABIN WAS NO DIFFERENT FROM THE PREVIOUS

ISRAELI LEADERS. HE ALSO INFERRED IN A DISPARAGING MANNER TO RABINS' INITIAL STATEMENTS AS PREMIER, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS TOUGH AS THOSE OF GOLDA MEIR. I TOLD AZIMOV I HAVE NOT HAD THE PLEASURE OF KNOWING RABIN BUT HIS INITIAL REMARKS DID NOT SURPRISE ME AT ALL IN THAT JUST HAVING BEEN SELECTED PREMIER AFTER A DIFFICULT CRISIS AND A SLIM MAJORITY, ONE SHOULD NOT EXPECT HIM TO TAKE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT POSITION THAN THAT OF HIS PREDECESSORS. IN A TRULY DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY AND WITH A SLIM PARLIAMENTARY MARGIN, ANY DIFFERENT APPROACH MIGHT REDUCE HIS EFFECTIVENESS UNTIL A NEW NATIONAL CONSENSUS HAD BEEN REACHED AND WAS ACCEPTED BY A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION.

5. AZIMOV THEN ASKED WHAT OUR PRESIDENT HOPED TO ACHIEVE IN HIS TOUR THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST. I TOLD HIM IT SEEMED CLEAR TO ME THAT OUR PRESIDENT WAS LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED IN HIS QUEST FOR A JUST, HONORABLE AND LASTING PEACE IN THIS AREA. I OPINED THAT HE WAS SEEKING ADVICE FROM WISE MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS ON HOW BEST WE ALL COULD PROCEED IN ACHIEVING THIS GOAL AND WANTED TO REASSURE THEM PERSONALLY THAT WE WERE SEEKING AN OVERALL PEACE IN THE AREA. ALTHOUGH GREAT SUCCESS HAD BEEN ACHIEVED IN THE SINAI AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, THE TOUGHEST PROBLEMS STILL WERE BEFORE US. THIS PORTION OF THE CONVERSATION ENDED WITH AZIMOV STATING WE INDEED HAD A COMMON GOAL AND HIS HOPE THAT OUR TWO EMBASSIES COULD WORK CLOSELY TOGETHER TOWARD THIS END.

6. WHILE EVERY OTHER DIPLOMAT IN BEIRUT AND ALL LEBANESE HAVE GONE OUT OF THEIR WAY TO PRAISE TO THE SKY THE SECRETARY'S SUCCESSES AND TO WELCOME WITHOUT ANY RESERVATION OUR PRESIDENT'S

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TRIP TO THE AREA, IT MIGHT BE SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE THAT AZIMOV NEVER ONCE SPOKE OF OUR SECRETARY OR WELL OF THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP.

7. AZIMOV SPOKE IN QUIET TONES AND DID NOT SHOW ANY EMOTION. FREQUENTLY HE GAVE ME THE IMPRESSION OF HAVING TO REPEAT SOVIET CLICHES (AGGRESSORS, ETC.). HE OBVIOUSLY IS A TOUGH PRO, WELL VERSED IN MIDDLE EASTERN PROBLEMS, WHO CAN LIE LIKE A RUG (AS INDICATED SEPTEL). IT ALSO CAME THROUGH TO ME LOUD AND CLEAR THAT WHILE HE WAS REPEATING THE RHETORIC AGAINST WALDHEIM AND FOR AN EARLY CONVENING OF GENEVA, HIS HEART IS NOT IN THIS POSITION AND HE BASICALLY AGREES WITH WHAT I UNDERSTAND TO BE OUR POSITION.

GODLEY

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